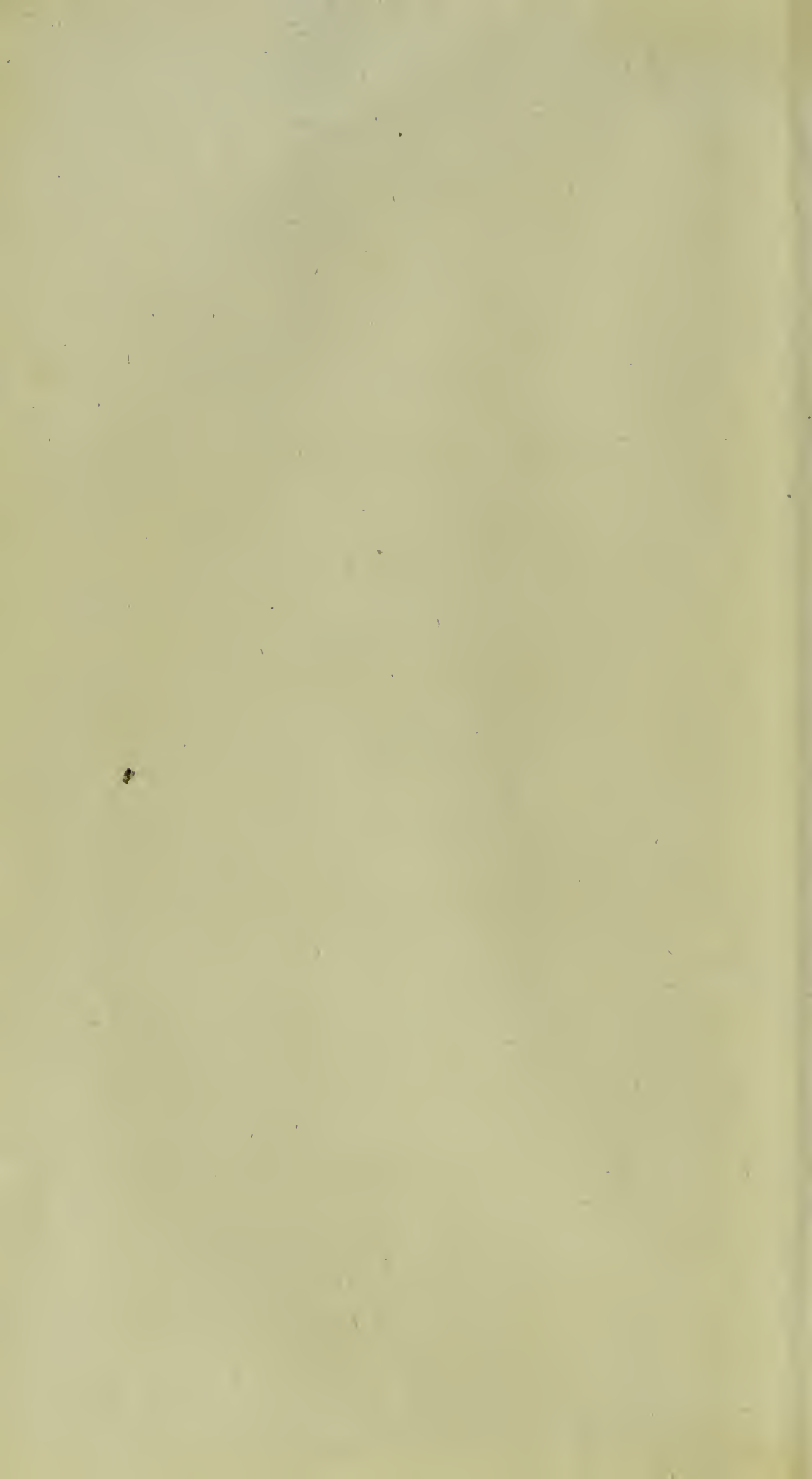




AN
ESSAY
ON THE
ABUSE OF SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS;

BEING
AN ATTEMPT TO EXHIBIT, IN ITS GENUINE COLOURS,
ITS PERNICIOUS EFFECTS
UPON THE
PROPERTY, HEALTH, AND MORALS,
OF THE PEOPLE,

WITH
RULES AND ADMONITIONS
RESPECTING THE
PREVENTION AND CURE
OF THIS
GREAT NATIONAL EVIL.

BY
A. FOTHERGILL, M.D. F.R.S.

Member of the Royal College of Physicians; of the Medical Societies
of London, Edinburgh, and Paris; of the Philosophical Societies of
Manchester, Philadelphia, &c.

HOC FONTE, DERIVATA CLADES
LATE IN PATRIAM, POPULUMQ; FLUXIT!

HOR.

BATH:
PRINTED BY R. CRUTTWELL.

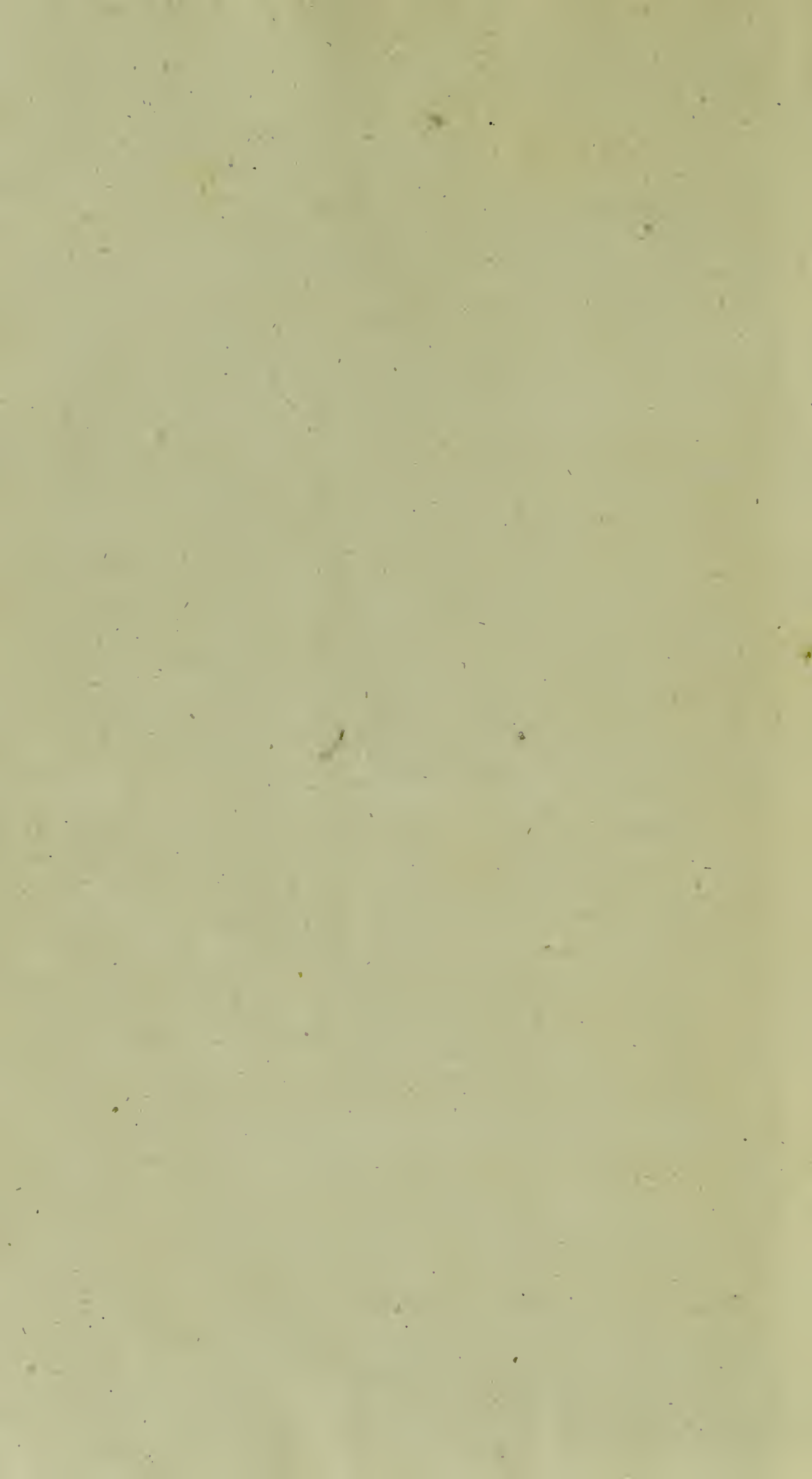
M DCC XCVI.

127
24

*Published pursuant to the Resolution of the Bath and West of
England Society, at their Anniversary Meeting, held
on the Eighth of December 1795; in order that each of
the Members may be presented with a Copy, and that they
may circulate the same in their respective Districts.*

SIR GEORGE PAUL, Bart. in the Chair.

TO
THE RIGHT HON. THE PRESIDENT,
THE VICE-PRESIDENTS,
AND MEMBERS OF THE
BATH AND WEST OF ENGLAND SOCIETY,
INSTITUTED FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, ARTS, MANUFACTURES, AND
COMMERCE,
THIS LITTLE ESSAY
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR VERY HUBMLE SERVANT AND COLLEAGUE,
THE AUTHOR.



ADVERTISEMENT.

IN obedience to the SOCIETY's request, I lately endeavoured to compress into a very small compass, perhaps too small, considering the importance of the subject, the substance of a much larger Essay, which accordingly, in its abridged state, was inserted in their seventh volume.

But in order to render it more worthy that public mark of approbation with which they were pleased to distinguish it, as the PRIZE ESSAY, I have carefully revised it throughout, and flatter myself the present copy will be found considerably improved, and therefore better intitled to answer their original design respecting a more general circulation.

Though composed with a fervent desire of rendering it useful to all whom it may concern of whatever station, yet it is chiefly designed for the benefit of the inferior ranks,
among

among whom this vice is most predominant : would we could add, and to them wholly confined ! for then would it soon become as unfashionable as it is contemptible. My aim has been to render the language sufficiently intelligible to ordinary capacities, without disgusting the more enlightened readers by vulgarity of style.

How far the writer has been enabled to accomplish so difficult a task, and to unite brevity with utility, must be left to the candid decision of the READER. Should the admonitions here offered, under the strongest conviction of their importance, prove sufficiently impressivè to reclaim but a few of those unhappy persons, it will afford him the most heartfelt satisfaction. Nay, if they serve but to put others upon their guard against contracting a habit so disgraceful in itself, and so destructive in its consequences, he trusts the Society will not deem their HONORARY PREMIUM ill bestowed.

ON THE ABUSE
OF
SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS, &c.

SECT. I.

Its Effects on Public and Private Property, and consequently on National Prosperity.

“**D**RUNKENNESS, says an ingenious Writer, is the common vice of poverty, not perhaps of poverty as such, but of the uncultivated mind; for it is the characteristic of unpolished nations to be fond of intoxicating liquors.”*

Whatever be the cause, it is but too true that the appetite among the common people for strong liquors is their darling passion, and that, like other depraved appetites, it increases in proportion as it is indulged. Man is an imitative animal, the creature of fashion, and, at an early period, becomes temperate, or intemperate, according as he is educated.

* The Rev. Mr. Townsend, author of an excellent Tract on the Poor Laws—Tour through Spain, &c.

“Just

“Just as the twig is bent the tree’s inclin’d.” Hence the necessity of parents teaching their children, not only by precept but example, how to sacrifice the present to the future, if they mean to prevent them from contracting such evil habits. Instead of this are not infants, in the cradle, often beguiled into a fondness for strong liquors by being dozed with drowsy cordials, and even encouraged by their inconsiderate parents to sip wine as soon as the poor innocents are able to lisp out their longings? This unfortunate fondness for strong liquors “grows with their growth, and strengthens with their strength,” till the passion becomes so imperious, that neither promises nor threats are powerful enough to overcome it. Hence when arrived at maturity, though conscious that this vice brings with it its own punishment, yet the miserable sufferers are so infatuated, as, in spite of locks and keys, to bribe the dependent nurse privately to procure the fatal draught.* A certain unhappy youth in Northamptonshire, whom I well remember, rapidly ran through the scale of intemperance in the following order. Dissatisfied with malt liquor, he began to drink wine and water. This he soon exchanged for brandy and water—from this, he proceeded to morning-whets of pure brandy, continually increasing his dose till it amounted to two bottles a-day, using about an equal quantity of sherry, by way of small beer!

* This has been well noticed by my learned friend Dr. Lett-
som, in his little Tract on Hard Drinking.—See also “Effects
of Spirituous Liquors,” by Dr. Rush of Philadelphia.

At length, overwhelmed with a complication of disorders, he began to complain that his liquors did not now warm his stomach as they were wont to do. His brandy-merchant next supplied him with a gallon of highly rectified spirits by way of sample. This he pronounced excellent brandy, and ordered a fresh cargo; but before he had emptied the third bottle, he died of extreme old age at 28 !

Among the lower class of dram-drinkers it matters not whether the liquor be genuine or adulterated, palatable or unpalatable, provided it be cheap, and possessed of the power of procuring speedy intoxication. Thus in the room of pure French brandy they are commonly presented with a fiery malt spirit. This, as we are informed, is sometimes corrected, or rather disguised, by the addition of another noxious ingredient, viz. *Aqua-fortis*.

Gin, that cheap and favourite liquor among the common people, is found, on inquiry, to be a more vulgar compound than they have hitherto been aware of. Would it not offend their delicacy, we might just hint, that the gin with which they are usually supplied by their honest friends the smugglers, instead of being a pure fragrant spirit of juniper, prepared in Holland, often turns out to be no other than a base English malt spirit, distilled from coarse turpentine, such as is commonly used by farriers. Such are the ingredients from whence it borrows its rank flavour ; also its heating, diuretic, and intoxicating qualities, with which its votaries are so much captivated ! Such at least,
(if

(if we may credit those who appear to be in the secret) is what is usually termed *Genuine Hollands*, warranted *neat* as imported!

Yet so unaccountable is the rage for this disgusting composition, that thousands of poor half famished creatures daily swallow it with insatiable avidity. Though supported, together with their helpless families, at the expence of the public, yet some of them have been known to pledge their allowance of bread, their clothes, nay, the very beds they lie on, to procure their accustomed dose of this detestable potion! When we descend into their comfortless abodes, what an affecting scene do we behold! Disease, poverty, and wretchedness, portrayed in their darkest and most gloomy colours! None but those who have witnessed such scenes can conceive the unspeakable misery into which this vice has plunged innumerable poor families.

It totally disqualifies men for activity and habits of industry, and when it has reduced them to abject poverty, they soon lose that spirit of independence, which ought to be their pride as Englishmen. The time mispent in riot and debauch, not only occasions an immense loss of labour, but disposes to incessant dissipation and utter aversion to all mental and corporeal improvement. Drunkenness is the secret bane of society, it ruins the peace of families, destroys conjugal endearments, and strikes at the very root of population. In the lower walks of life, men addicted to this vice have no concern in making provision for a family, or ambition of earning, at their respective trades, more than barely sufficient to buy the daily portion of spirits this
being

being the sum total of their wishes, or, in their own language, “ their meat, drink, and clothes.”

Among all descriptions of men it has a pernicious tendency, and in proportion as it is propagated by example, it becomes injurious to public as well as private property, and consequently to national prosperity. Among tradesmen and mechanics, it produces debts, disgrace, and bankruptcy. Among farmers, bad tillage and universal bad management; such as fields and gardens overrun with weeds, broken fences, and half-clad dirty children, destitute of good manners or education. Among domestic servants and hirelings, idleness, loss of character, and beggary.

In the year 1751, when the abuse of spirits had risen to an alarming height, the number of dram-drinkers, in Great-Britain, according to a very able politician, amounted at least to 400,000.* On balancing the account between the profits arising to government, and the damage accruing to the nation at large; he endeavours to prove, that a loss little less than four millions must yearly fall on the trading interest, the landed interest, and the revenue of Great-Britain. “ To pretend, says he, to shew which of these three are the least sufferers would be a poor consolation; be it sufficient to observe, they must all jointly suffer.” His statement of the annual loss, it is to be observed, related only to the supposed number of dram-drinkers existing at that period. But if to this we add the damage which the nation sustains by the premature and untimely

* See Inquiry into the Effects of Spirits, &c. by my learned friend the Dean of Gloucester.

deaths of so many British subjects, how shall we estimate the loss! In the year 1794 the produce of ten capital distilleries in London only, we are informed, amounted to the enormous quantity of 237,233,960 gallons! What then must be the amount through the whole kingdom, and how immense the annual consumption from the year 1755 to the year 1795! If to this we should add all the foreign spirits that have been consumed in Great-Britain during the above period, the sum total would almost baffle calculation! Can we longer wonder why our parishes are overburthened with poor? Why our prisons overflow with insolvent debtors and desperate felons;—or why our poor's rates, amounting to a sum little short of three millions a-year, should be rapidly increasing?

But is it not still more mortifying to observe the poor of the surrounding nations supported wholly without any poor's rates, while the miseries of our own poor, in spite of this additional aid, seem to increase, and keep pace with the increasing expenditure! If intemperance in spirituous liquors be the principal cause, is it not high time that an effectual check should be given to this growing evil, and also that some more efficient, more œconomical scheme be adopted, for the benefit of the poor, that may prove more favourable to industry and sobriety?—Might an individual here presume to offer a few hints on this truly important subject, it is hoped the following short sketch may not be deemed either impertinent, or wholly beneath the attention of Government.

The

The outlines of the PLAN then, for promoting Industry and Sobriety among the Poor, might consist,

1st. In giving all possible encouragement to the useful arts, particularly to Agriculture, and in expediting the cultivation of the Waste Lands and Commons.

2d. In the establishment of Houses of Industry, and Reform of Morals in the respective counties, similar to those excellent institutions which have long been so happily experienced in Holland.

3d. In the establishment of Friendly Societies throughout the kingdom upon a more liberal and extensive scale, comprehending various ranks of people, similar to what has been properly suggested by my ingenious friend, Mr. Pew of Shaftesbury ; but with some necessary alterations respecting the periodical subscriptions—the number of persons in a family, and the ability of the subscribers ; and with due attention to local and collateral circumstances, as mentioned in the 6th and 7th volumes of the Society's Memoirs.

4th. In restricting the Distilleries, and increasing the Duty on all Spirituous Liquors. Should no means short of even a total prohibition of spirits be found effectual, what ought to be the alternative ? Should the mere acquisition of revenue arising from spirits be suffered to stand in competition with the HEALTH AND VIRTUE of the Community ? Or is there no method of supporting revenue but at the expence of the more important interests of the nation, POPULATION, PROPERTY and COMMERCE, the GREAT SOURCES from whence revenue itself is derived, and to which it ought ever to be subservient ?

5. In reducing the number of Public-Houses, and in reforming various abuses to which they are at present liable, particularly

particularly the absurd custom of paying workmen at these houses their weekly wages on Saturday evening, where a scene of drunkenness commences, which is seldom completely over till the Monday, or perhaps Tuesday following

6th. By establishing honorary premiums for the encouragement of Merit, among the Members of the aforesaid Institutions, to be conferred at stated periods, in a public manner, on such as have distinguished themselves by their strict sobriety, patient industry, or some signal act of virtue or magnanimity, under trying circumstances.

Were this Plan once effectually carried into execution (and it certainly is not impracticable) it would strike at the very root of one of our greatest National Evils, and afford ample provision for the poor. For by thus removing the principal cause, might Poverty itself, in a great measure, be prevented, the poor's rates reduced, and at length finally abolished. Add to this, that MANY MILLIONS would be annually saved to the landed interest.

Then might the health of the common people be preserved—their morals improved—their independence secured—their industry encouraged—and their virtue rewarded.

But to return.—

SECT.

SECT. II.

Its Effects on the Human Frame.

THE Chemists who first discovered the art of obtaining from innocent ingredients a noxious intoxicating spirit, perhaps little dreamt that the disclosure of that fatal secret, like the opening of Pandora's box, would instantly let loose upon mankind such a formidable crowd of evils;—evils that would overbalance all their splendid discoveries, and triumph over all their boasted remedies! For had they sat down to study the surest means of destroying health and life, without making an open direct attack upon either; they certainly could not have devised a more effectual method than by introducing, to the ignorant multitude, this fascinating poison; which first like a friendly cordial cheers the heart and raises the spirits, but secretly saps the constitution, and at length unhinges the whole frame!

Exclusive of war, pestilence, and famine, those dreadful scourges of nations, it is perhaps the most deadly and insidious foe that ever infested this country. For this Evil Spirit, like a destroying angel, stalks through the land with a steady though silent step, every where spreading its baleful influence over our cities and villages, particularly among our poor infatuated soldiers, sailors, manufacturers, and day-labourers.

It not only poisons the present generation, but even blasts the hopes of the next, by intailing disease, misery, and wretchedness, on their innocent offspring! For the milk of intemperate mothers or nurses, addicted to spirits, is peculiarly injurious to the tender frame of infants whom they suckle. Hence the number of sickly, puny children, bearing at their birth the marks of shrivelled old age, prone to convulsions, and born but to expire.

It has been clearly proved by the Rev. Dr. Hales, that the mortality among young children, and the decrease of births, keep equal pace with the abuse of spirituous liquors. Hence the striking difference in both circumstances between London and Paris, the habit of dram-drinking being incomparably greater in the former than in the latter.

In London, in the year 1750, the burials were found to exceed the christenings by	- - - -	9,179
In Paris, in the same year, the christenings exceeded the burials by	- -	951

Balance against London on both articles in one year	- -	} 10,130
---	-----	----------

This statement of Dr. Hales relates to children under five years old only, exclusive of all that prodigious number of English subjects above that age, whose lives are continually shortened by the same destructive habit! Such a degree of mortality among the infant species is unknown among the young of other animals, and is surely an alarming circumstance to population.

In tracing the effects of ardent spirit on the human body, we find that it exerts its pernicious influence first on the stomach, the inner coat of which is exposed to its full action. It soon deadens that exquisite sensibility of its nerves, which gives the keen edge to appetite, so essential to digestion. But this important organ, from its intimate connection with all the noble parts, may be considered as the KEY-STONE of the fabric; for whatever tends to injure this endangers the whole, and in process of time lets down the goodly structure. On the liver, it seems to exert a specific power, and by indurating and enlarging its substance, vitiates the bile, interrupts its course, and renders it incapable of performing its functions.

From its action on these two important organs, its effects are propagated far and wide to other parts of the system. Hence may be explained the principal symptoms, *viz.* the morning qualms—the loathing and sickness—the abhorrence of all foods except such as are highly seasoned—the sense of faintness and debility—the sinkings, languors, and horrors, which habitual dram-drinkers so often experience. Hence also it is that they so rarely survive the attack of an inflammatory or acute disease. For this abuse not only creates maladies peculiar to itself, but renders others more complex, more dangerous, and more difficult to cure.

To enumerate the manifold sufferings which conspire to embitter the lives of those unfortunate persons would require a whole volume.

Suffice it to observe, in general, that the liver being diseased, and the constitution enfeebled, the

jaundice ensues. This gradually slides into an incurable dropsy, which at length closes the fatal scene! Some, who escape jaundice or dropsy, contract gout or stone, palsy or insanity, while others are suddenly taken off by apoplexy. For this poison, whether quick or slow in its operation, is always *sure* at the last.

Some few hardy veterans, indeed, inured by degrees to a sort of regular intemperance, seasoned by their liquor, as they term it, now and then hold out much longer than could be reasonably expected. Poor encouragement this to a life of intemperance, which at best is but to drag on a "*feverish state of being*," deformed by vice, and chequered with infirmities! For be it remembered, that where one of these grey-headed sots, through dint of constitution, arrives at sixty or seventy years of age, thousands, in the very act of seasoning, are cut off in their prime.

But what is remarkable, their untimely fate proves no warning to their boon companions, who continue to pursue the same desperate course, till, like leaves in autumn, they drop off one by one, to make room for a similar set of hopeful successors!

Notwithstanding such examples, their comrades strive to flatter themselves that spirituous liquors, if not entirely innocent, are at least not very injurious.

They remain to be told, however, that a wine-glass full of spirits, when forced into the stomach of domestic animals, throws them into violent convulsions; that even a tea-spoonful injected into their veins almost instantly deprives them of life. So immediately fatal are its effects, when brought
into

into contact with the naked nerves or blood-vessels, that it may literally be pronounced a poison of the most dangerous and malignant kind. It is abhorred by the brute creation, who uniformly turn away from it with evident marks of disgust. It is equally detested by man in his infant state, till his appetite is depraved by evil example, and his natural aversion subdued by the ALL-CONQUERING power of HABIT. But since custom has rendered the use of spirits so familiar in this country, the malady is become epidemic, and pervades even the most sequestered hamlets, insomuch that it is now become difficult even for the more sober and abstemious part of the community wholly to escape the contagion.

Here it is with peculiar concern that truth constrains me to confess, what I wished to conceal, namely, that instances of this failing are by no means wanting even among the female sex. To a single oversight of this nature, how many beautiful unfortunates of humble station have cause to ascribe their ruin! From being once the patterns of temperance, and every thing that was amiable, they are now cruelly deserted, and reduced to infamy and contempt!

Women of rank and education, however, are rarely betrayed into a fondness for strong liquors, except through the misconduct or cruel treatment of those of the opposite sex, who ought to have been the trusty guardians of their health and morals.

Among the inferior class of women indeed, one frequent, though unsuspected cause of this abuse is the immoderate use of tea. This relaxing be-

verage, poured down hot, as it generally is, at least twice a-day, tends to unnerve the female frame, and produce universal languor.

The natural spirits being depressed, recourse is imprudently had to artificial ones, the property of which is first to wind up the springs of life far above the natural pitch, then suddenly to let them down as far below it. Hence it is that each glass of spirits requires two more to obviate its own bad effects, and the remedy at length is discovered to be tenfold worse than the disease!

SECT. III.

Its Effects on the Mind and Morals.

FROM this painful view of our subject, let us proceed to contemplate its effects on men's minds and morals; though here, it is to be feared, our prospect will continue to darken around us.

It is very observable, that wine, beer, and other fermented liquors, drank too freely, commonly produce extravagant mirth and gaiety, ending in drowsiness and stupidity; while, on the other hand, spirituous liquors tend to kindle up the more angry and morose passions, often terminating in fury and outrage. The former brings on intoxication in a more slow, gradual manner; the latter seizes the brain almost immediately, without leaving time for recollection.

This

This material difference in their effects may be easily accounted for, if we consider that it is the spirituous part of liquors *only* that causes intoxication, and that this can never rise to such a height when the spirit is in a tempered and diluted form, as when poured down in its ardent state, and unallayed.

Hence double-distilled spirits, though ever so genuine in their kind, are more suddenly destructive than the weaker proof spirits. This potent poison affords men the speediest means of getting rid of their reason, the faculty that elevates them above the brute creation. It overthrows memory, judgment, and all the intellectual powers, introducing in their place a temporary phrenzy; converting, at once, a rational inoffensive being into a ferocious animal, and prompting him to commit acts of mischief and extravagancy, which, in his cooler hours, he would contemplate with abhorrence. As soon as this frantic fit subsides, stupefaction ensues, and he sinks down into a state of total insensibility, during which the mind remains a complete blank.——

What a humiliating spectacle is here!—How apt to inspire compassion—contempt—resentment—and horror!—Here behold the man, who from being lately a Sovereign among the creatures, and possessed of the Divine attribute of Reason—now transformed into the most helpless, odious, and disgusting animal in the creation! In such a hideous state of disguise, well might the Spartans exhibit their meanest slaves, the more effectually to deter their sober youths from drunkenness. For
drunkenness,

drunkenness, be it observed, is not to be considered as a mere simple vice, since, in this one, most others are included.

Sobriety, the main guardian of virtue, being once banished, a direct avenue is opened for the admission of every vice, I had almost said, of every crime.

Of this, an admired Moralist relates a very affecting instance. A certain amiable youth of distinguished virtue and sobriety had resolutely withstood every temptation which a set of profligate companions could invent to corrupt his morals, till one evening they contrived to make him drunk: the plot succeeded, perhaps, beyond their expectation. Heated with strong liquor, to which he never before had been accustomed, he sallied forth in pursuit of adventures, and on that fatal night committed robbery and murder! Thus, by a single act of intoxication, was this promising youth suddenly plunged into the depth of misery and despair!—Such are the direful effects of intemperance!

Men addicted to this shameful excess lose by degrees all sense of honour, virtue, and religion; and when these sacred ties are once dissolved, they become ungovernable, and trample upon all laws human and divine.

For a while they strive to stifle the voice of conscience with incessant drams; and when their passions are thus roused to a pitch of ferocity, they are prepared to engage in the most daring enterprise of villainy without shame, fear, or remorse.

Hence those dreadful blasphemies, burglaries, conflagrations, and murders, attended often with
the

the most savage acts of barbarity, which the newspapers weekly proclaim!

Thence follow the black calendars, which periodically issue from the Old Bailey and other prisons, announcing the numerous executions which shock our feelings, astonish foreigners, and disgrace our national police!

SECT. IV.

Whether Spirituous Liquors are allowable as a temporary Cordial on certain emergencies.

IT has long been received as a settled maxim among the advocates for spirituous liquors that they are not only useful, but absolutely necessary, to fortify the human frame against the vicissitudes of climate, and enable it to undergo bodily fatigue. Hence the large allowance of spirits granted from time to time in the equipment of our fleets and armies. Whether this, even in unhealthy climates, be really so necessary, or to the extent that is commonly imagined, may be justly doubted. The merit of the question rests with superior judges, and to their consideration we venture to submit the following observations.

That the general maxim, though plausible, is liable to weighty objections, appears evident, not only

only from those abstemious persons among our own countrymen, who drink nothing but water, but also from entire nations, who never taste spirits, and yet enjoy health and vigour in a super-eminent degree. Behold, while writing this, I am visited by my worthy friend Dr. BENJAMIN PUGH, of Midford Castle, who is a striking instance of what I am saying. Having from early youth abstained from wines, spirits, and fermented liquors; he declares, that at this moment he not only enjoys superior health and vivacity, but feels himself as capable of every mental or corporeal exertion, as he did at twenty-five, though now in the eighty-second year of his age!

At Constantinople, where the use of strong liquors is wisely prohibited, the Turkish porters, whose only beverage is water or lemonade, are observed to perform their laborious task with alacrity, and with firm step to sustain burthens under which our dram-drinking porters would droop and stagger.

The brave soldiers, under the Roman republic, whose drink consisted of vinegar and water alone, underwent incredible fatigue in traversing unhealthy climates, and fighting beneath a heavy load of armour. Yet these intrepid water-drinking warriors nobly surmounted all hardships, nay, undertook to conquer the world, without the miserable aid of spirituous liquors!

But it is no less observable that when afterwards the Romans became enervated by luxury and intemperance, they fell, in their turn, an easy prey to the more rude and barbarous nations of the North.

What

What has hitherto been advanced against the abuse of spirits, is not to be understood as applicable to their use. For according to its use, a poison may be transformed into a medicine, and a medicine into a poison. Genuine spirit, when converted into punch, affords a generous cordial, and is certainly preferable to the adulterated wines that are but too commonly vended. For here the spirit, properly diluted with water and tempered with a due proportion of the acid of the fruit, and the whole perfectly combined by the intervention of sugar, loses its fiery quality, and becomes a new liquor, not only more palatable, but more wholesome, than when merely dashed with water in the common method.

On certain emergencies, therefore, as in cases of sudden fainting, or when a person has long been exposed to tempestuous weather, or exhausted by sickness or bodily fatigue; a few glasses of warm punch may not be improper to prevent a greater evil.

“ Give strong drink (says king Solomon) only to him that is ready to perish.”—Such was the advice of the wisest of men; and thrice happy would it be for mankind were it always strictly pursued. Then would drunkenness, that odious vice, soon be compelled to hide its unsightly visage, and sobriety, the guardian of virtue, return once more to preside over our happy isle. Then would the rising generation be taught to withstand the allurements of the maddening bowl, and to temper the higher flights of conviviality with harmless mirth——

“ The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

SECT.

SECT. V.

Rules and Admonitions for the Prevention and Cure of this Vice.

IF such then are the pernicious effects of spirituous liquors on public and private property—on health—on morals—nay, on life itself, need any other arguments be adduced to inspire my readers with an utter detestation of a vice so malignant in its nature—so fatal in its consequences! On the contrary, may it not be hoped that, by this time, it is no longer necessary to urge the matter farther, nay, quite as superfluous as it would be to caution them from swallowing arsenic, or throwing themselves headlong from a precipice? Not to appear too sanguine, however, in a matter which experience shews to be doubtful, and wherein excess of caution never can do harm, I shall beg leave yet to add a few more serious and friendly admonitions. For in morals, no less than in medicine, PREVENTION is easier and better than CURE.

I. Permit me then most earnestly to intreat you sober persons, who have hitherto cautiously abstained from spirits, but particularly my Female Readers, as you value your health and every thing that is dear to you, to persevere in your resolution of remaining firm against the temptation.

Let no strong liquors be lightly ventured upon as a remedy against bodily pain or uneasiness of mind, nor let any specious arguments betray you into a belief that such liquors, except in the cases already mentioned, either are, or can be necessary to persons in health, much less to young children.

Since it rests entirely with you who are strictly temperate to give an effectual check to this unseemly vice in others,
you

you cannot keep too watchful an eye over your own conduct. Let me particularly persuade you, of higher station, who preside over fashion, and model our manners, to exert all your influence—all your authority—to discountenance it in our sex, and thereby render it totally unfashionable.

II. Let those who have been enticed frequently to taste spirituous liquors, or rich cordials, till at length they begin to have a fondness for them, reflect a moment on the danger of their situation, and resolve to make a speedy and honourable retreat. Remember, that custom soon changes into habit : that habit is a second nature more stubborn than the first, and of all things most difficult to be subdued. For it is by such little unsuspected beginnings that this unfortunate habit is generally contracted, and when once confirmed, rarely terminates but with life ! Learn then in time to resist this bewitching spirit, whenever it tempts you. Then will you soon find yourselves so perfectly easy without it, as at length never to regret its absence ; nay, peculiarly happy in having escaped the allurements of such a dangerous and insidious enemy.

The following very curious Advertisement is copied from the Bahama Gazette, of June the 30th, 1795.

‘ Whereas the Subscriber, through the pernicious habit of drinking for many years, has greatly hurt himself in purse and person, and rendered himself odious to all his acquaintance ; finding that there is no possibility of breaking off from the said practice, but through impossibility to find the liquor, he therefore earnestly begs and prays that in future no person will sell him, either for money or on trust, any sort of spirituous liquors, as he will not in future pay for it, but will prosecute any one for an action of damage against the temporal and eternal interest of the public’s humble, serious, sober servant,

‘ JAMES CHALMERS.’

‘ William Andrew, witness to the signing.
‘ NASSAU, June 28, 1795.’

An illustrious example of the doctrine which I wish to enforce, and highly worthy the imitation of all those whose resolution is not sufficiently strong to resist the temptation. There is certainly a material difference between being tempted, and seeking a temptation. For many who would never have sought a temptation, may yet be overcome when assailed by it.

III. Having thus far suggested means by which this vice may be prevented, or even remedied in its earlier stages, I now proceed to the more difficult part of my task—the bold, the arduous attempt to reclaim the thorough-paced dram-drinker, whose habit has been contracted in youth, strengthened by indulgence, and rivetted by time—a task, which some, perhaps, may think as impracticable as to wash the *Æthiopian* white, or divest the leopard of his spots!—Difficult undoubtedly it is, though not impracticable, since I can venture to affirm that every thing necessary to accomplish it is contained in two words, *viz.*—TO BEAR, and to FORBEAR.—Learn to *bear* the present want of your accustomed liquor, and *forbear* evermore even to taste it. Instances are not wanting where this difficulty has been completely surmounted. Plead no longer, therefore, your want of power to perform what has been accomplished by others in your situation. For it is not merely the want of power that prevents you from recovering your freedom, but the want of will—the want of resolution to be free—and the want of these is the want of every thing requisite to your cure.

All sudden transitions being accounted very dangerous, the following methods of gradually weaning men from the abuse of spirits have been practised by some, and not altogether without success :

1st. “ Let it be a rule, say they, never to drink but from a particular decanter marked for the purpose, and whenever a glass of the liquor is poured out, replace it immediately with an

an equal quantity of water, and pursue this steadily till the contents are reduced to mere water." Or,

2d. "Drink constantly out of one glass, and the moment it is emptied drop into it a single drop of melted sealing-wax, and continue this daily till there be no longer any room for a drop of spirit."

By resolutely persevering in these methods for a long space of time, the inveterate habit, we are assured, has been entirely subdued, at least, in two remarkable cases, and others probably might be produced. Permit me here to observe, in general, that the relinquishing this pernicious habit suddenly does not appear to be such a dangerous undertaking as you have been taught to imagine. Otherwise, how comes it that those drunkards, who have been all at once debarred the use of spirits by confinement in a well-regulated prison, have not only been cured of their former propensity, but their health has been improved, and their life prolonged?

Instead therefore of the slow and uncertain expedients recommended by others, let me advise the following improved Plan, which, if duly observed, you will find as effectual as it is expeditious.—It is perhaps not yet too late, but must be begun without delay.

Resolve then, by one bold stroke, to break the enchantment at once. Having ransacked your cellar and closets of all spirituous liquors, and spirituous compounds, consign the entire cargo to your brandy-merchant, either gratis, or on his own terms. Next let a memorandum be instantly drawn up and attested, in the presence of the Minister of the parish, or of some respectable character, of known sobriety, declaring, under a voluntary penalty to some public charity, your fixed resolution of renouncing from this day, all spirituous liquors of every description, for the full term of——suppose—two years. Let it be kept in your pocket-book as a constant monitor, under the title of RESOLUTION INVIOABLE, and perused at stated periods, together with THESE RULES.—At the expiration of the term, I shall
be

be happy to see an ATTESTED CERTIFICATE of the engagement having been faithfully performed, and then to suggest such further term of keeping the instrument in force, as may seem necessary to complete the cure.

During the interval, you may be allowed good wine, beer, cider, or perry, in moderation. But remember—not a drop of spirits, of any kind, must be tasted on any pretence whatsoever. Frequent cravings after the delusive liquor, with certain unpleasant feelings, must and will sometimes obtrude themselves. These, for a while, though not dangerous, will be found irksome: they may, however, be banished by an occasional cup of ginger, or ginseng tea, or rather by brisk exercise and firm resolution. But were these sensations a thousand times more troublesome, not an inch of ground must be yielded till you have gained a complete victory. The generous warfare in which you are engaged, is not against a foreign but a domestic foe, not to destroy life, but to preserve it:—a contest truly worthy of a rational being!—Should the attempt seem too painful, think what infinitely greater trials of penance and self-denial the Monks of Chartreux—of La Trappé, or the Brahmins of India, those unhappy votaries of superstition, voluntarily undergo!

The present conflict, remember, is not for the fading laurel, or tinsel wreath, for which others so earnestly contend, but for those more blooming, more substantial honours, which HEALTH the DAUGHTER OF TEMPERANCE only can bestow. For it is thine, O HEALTH, and THINE ALONE, to diffuse through the human breast, that genial warmth, that serene sunshine, which glows in the cheek—which sparkles in the eye—and which animates the whole frame!

IV. I come now to that class of veterans, who, deaf to every remonstrance, have long rioted in every species of excess, and are now arrived at the last stage of intemperance. For those who pride themselves in living fast, seem

to think the taper of life cannot be consumed with sufficient rapidity without being lighted at both ends ! Bent upon what they term a “ *short and merry life*,” though, in truth, a short and miserable one, they will doubtless spurn at these admonitions, and run headlong to their own destruction. Strange infatuation ! Can you, as Britons, submit to such despicable slavery, and tamely give up your boasted freedom without one generous struggle ? Is vice then truly more desirable than virtue ?—Sickness and remorse, than health and serenity ?—Be it so—go on, and wisely resolve to finish your career—nor shall I attempt to stop you a moment to contest the envied right, to which you lay claim, of ruining yourselves in your own way.—With minds depraved, and constitutions shattered, I perceive you are hastening fast to “ that bourne from whence no traveller returns.”

As you have probably long ceased to consider yourselves as accountable beings, it may now be deemed impertinent to revive your misgivings on that subject, or to dash your fond hopes of taking shelter in non-existence by reminding you of the possibility of an HEREAFTER——“ To die—to sleep—nay perchance to dream—yes, there’s the rub !”——How great must be your surprize should you suddenly be roused from that dream ! When the thick mist is dispelled—when the day begins to dawn, and discovers you naked and alone on the confines of that unknown country !—But what must be your consternation—when on a sudden the veil is drawn aside—and at once displays to your astonished eyes

But here let us pause——It is not for mortals to presume to penetrate into the mysteries of the invisible world—or to unfold the secrets of futurity : neither is preaching my province. To the inspired Divine it belongs to resume the subject where I am obliged to drop it, and to expatiate on those higher arguments, which, with a trembling pen, I have scarcely ventured to suggest.

His

His dignified office it is to enforce them with such peculiar energy as may carry conviction home to the bosoms of such desperate self-murderers, to prepare them, while here on earth, for the awful scenes which await them in a future state; and finally to admonish others, who are still addicted to this unhappy course, to take warning by their sad example!

